

A Preschool Adventure

by Linda Hunter

It all began one early summer day when Mom, Dad, my baby brother and I went for a walk down Fourth Street to my Aunt Erna and Uncle Alex' house. I went inside to see Robbie, who at three and one-half years was my junior by five months. While we were playing in her bedroom and her new little sister slept soundly, the adults were chatting outside.

What could two little girls get into?

"Robbie, where are your shoes?" I asked my cousin who was barefoot and still in her pjs. Robbie said she did not know, and as we were not permitted to play outside in bare feet, I decided that we had to buy her new shoes.

As Robbie adored me, it was easy to convince her that we had to go shopping. Imitating my mother, since in those days we dressed up when we went downtown, I decided that Robbie's long brown hair required washing before donning a pretty summer dress. I couldn't find shampoo, but knowing this was hair soap, I used a bar of soap in its stead. As neither of us could reach the sink, we used the toilet! My mother had dressed me in a lovely little dress to match her own and had fixed my hair, so I was ready for our shopping adventure.

We slipped out the back door and under the fence to a pathway that led to Second Avenue, past Kirkland Lake Collegiate and Vocational Institute, past the hospital, over one block to Kirkpatrick and the Town Hall, where in its lower depths was the police station.

My father was a policeman, and as was the custom of my mother and I when we went shopping, we always popped into the station to see my Dad. Down the stairs we went only to be faced with a high counter that we could not see over, and the Sergeant seated behind could not see two little preschoolers. Just before the high counter was a room that served as a locker room, staff room, lunch room and lounge with comfy chesterfield and chairs. In we went and closed the door behind us. Soon the cushions were off the couch and chairs and we had our fort. Now we were hungry and lined up on the table were the constables' lunch boxes. Sandwiches! Soup in thermoses! Cookies and cake! Party time!

While we were having a grand old time, our parents were panicking. They searched high and low for us only to discover the mess in the bathroom. Embarrassing as it was for my Dad, it was time to call for assistance. All off-duty police were called in to work for the search. The municipal swimming pool and the woods were checked. Cars were checked and a door to door search was launched. All the places that I had been found in during my prior escapes were visited by the searchers.

In due course, the Police Inspector just happened to enter the staff room and we were found -- fast asleep in our fort, in the police station lounge. It was a great relief to all, but for years after, the Police never lived down that the cause of their search was in their own backyard! As this was not the first time that police had been called to search for me in my very short lifetime, Dad also faced much ribbing from his colleagues.

We never did get to go shopping for shoes.

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Near on seventy years have passed and I am the only one still living, but the story of our adventure has been told countless times in family gatherings over the years. Whenever I think of Robbie, I will always fondly remember our first great adventure together.